



News Release

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2003 Performance Report Rates Utah's Health Plans

(Salt Lake City, UT) – This is the time of year when many Utahns choose a new health maintenance organization (HMO) or make changes to their insurance coverage. A new publication by the Utah Department of Health's Health Data Committee and Division of Health Care Financing titled, *2003 Performance Report for Utah Health Plans*, gives consumers valuable information when researching or choosing a health plan. Approximately 35 percent of Utah's insured population is covered by one of the health plans in this report.

The data covers both commercial HMOs that serve employment-based enrollees and Medicaid HMOs. A total of seven Utah HMOs participated in collecting data. Participating commercial HMOs were Altius Health Plans, CIGNA Healthcare of Utah, IHC Health Plans, Regence HealthWise and UnitedHealthcare. For some of these organizations, HMO products represent only a small portion of their business, while for others, it comprises most if not all of their business. The Medicaid HMOs were Molina Health Care and Healthy U. "This report allows healthcare consumers to make informed decisions about their healthcare and at the same time helps HMOs know where to make quality improvements," said Annette Herman, HMO Representative for the Utah Health Data Committee, President and CEO of UnitedHealthcare Utah. "The data helps drive community education efforts and that helps improve our residents' health status overall."

The first part of the report describes how Utah's HMOs are performing in different areas of health care. Results show that Utah's commercial HMOs as a group are performing above the national average in adults' access to preventive care and blood sugar control in people with diabetes. Utah's commercial HMOs also have a lower Cesarean section delivery rate than the rest of the nation. HMOs scored lower than the national average for children and adolescents' well-visits and childhood immunizations. Immunization rates have shown improvement over last year, reflecting the state's efforts to make sure that all Utah children receive appropriate immunizations.

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More than two-thirds of the children covered by commercial HMOs have received all of the required immunizations.

Medicaid HMOs scored higher than the national average scores on several performance measures including: children’s access to primary care practitioners, well-child visits in the first 15 months of life, prenatal care, C-section rates, childhood immunizations, adults’ access to preventive care, and care for people with diabetes.

Some areas in which Medicaid HMOs need to improve are well-care visits for children ages 3 to 6 and for adolescents, breast and cervical cancer screenings, and chlamydia screenings in women.

The second part of the 2003 Health Plan Performance Report describes the results of the Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (CAHPS), conducted in the spring of 2003. A total of 2,146 people enrolled in commercial HMOs and 2,069 people enrolled in Medicaid health plans answered the survey. The survey measured consumer satisfaction in several areas of care and service.

Enrollees expressed a high level of satisfaction with their personal doctor or nurse and the staff at their doctor’s office. More than 90 percent of those surveyed indicated that they “always or usually” had good communication with their provider and more than 91 percent indicated that medical staff was “always or usually” helpful and courteous. The report suggests that Utah’s commercial HMOs need to improve in claims processing and customer service.

The 2003 survey was conducted by mail (3,435) followed by telephone (780) interviews for non-respondents. Since 1996, the survey reports have provided useful information to Utah’s health service purchasers, health policy makers, individual consumers and health plans. All of the above-reported findings are statistically significant at 95 percent confidence level. The data for the report was collected between March and May, 2003. For a copy of the report, visit

<http://health.utah.gov/hda/>

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.